DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 030 676 TE 500 559

By-Eastman, Arthur M.

How Visitation Came to Carnegie-Mellon University.

Association of Departments of English, New York, N.Y.
Pub Date May 69
Note-11p.
Journal Cit-ADE Bulletin; n21 p10-20 May 1969
EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.65
Descriptors-Academic Rank (Professional), Administrative Policy, *Classroom Observation Techniques, *College Faculty, *Effective Teaching, *English Instruction, Evaluation Needs, *Faculty Evaluation, Program Improvement, Senior Teacher Role, Teacher Administrator Relationship, Teacher Attitudes, Teacher Evaluation, Teacher Morale, Teacher Response, Teacher Supervision
Identifiers-Carnegie Mellon University, Pennsylvania, Pittsburg

Faculty debate preceding the introduction of a visitation program designed to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of the instructors and professors of the Carnegie-Mellon University English department examines the advisability of initiating such a program and the machinery used to assure its introduction. Comprising the major portion of the article are reproductions of the forms notifying the visitor and the visited of an impending visitation and a number of letters from faculty members of all ages and professional rank expressing freely their opinions concerning the proposed program. (AF)

PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

OFFICE OF EDUCATION

TE 500 559

From: ADE Bulletin of the Association of Departments of English, Number 21, May 1969.

HOW VISITATION CAME TO CARNEGIE-MELLON UNIVERSITY

by Arthur M. Eastman, Carnegie-Mellon University

When the new chairman of the English Department came to Carnegie-Mellon from the University of Michigan in the fall of 1968, he came to a department that did not visit its teachers from a department that did. The system at Michigan, practiced during the first four semesters of a new man's appointment there, had its drawbacks, of course--bland reports from lazy visitors at times, hyperactive adrenalin secretion among the insecure, occasional obtusenesses on the part of visitors or conflicts of personality between teacher and visitor--but by and large it was useful. It improved pedagogy and it gave the department some more precise sense than it otherwise would have had of the abilities of its men. It was a way of practicing institutionally the ideal of the examined life. So the new chairman conceived it, at any rate, and he wanted to see his colleagues adopt such a system at Carnegie.

His elder colleagues soberly saw some difficulties. Not only would there be the usual human disinclination to submit to evaluation and the usual fear that evaluation would be myopic, prejudiced, and ruthless, but to institute the scheme properly probably meant visiting all the instructors (12) and all the assistant professors (10)--22 out of a department of 38--a taxing job. Though they did not fully communicate the point, they saw, too, that if visitation arrayed or seemed to array the younger as the visited, their elders as visitors, it would activate and intensify schismatic tensions that as recently as the preceding spring had threatened to disintegrate the department.

Notwithstanding, the chairman thought the department could be persuaded to accept the practice. Nine months before coming to Carnegie, at the interviewing that led to his appointment, he had indicated that he regarded visitation beneficial. In the fall he had brought up the topic at various meetings with members of the junior ranks. To members of the department he circulated copies of the forms used at Michigan, one notifying the instructor of the impending visitation, the other notifying the visitor of his duties. These forms, he indicated, had to his mind about the right content and tone:

> Dear Mr. _____:
>
> I should like to ask you to visit this semester classes taught by Mr. _____. He will be asked to arrange dates with you and to acquaint you with his handling of course materials.
>
> The principal object of these visits is to give encouragement and friendly counsel to new or relatively new members of our staff. To this end, it is indispensable to confer with the instructor you are visiting and to give him appreciative and candid comments that may increase his effectiveness and his sense of professional achievement. Although our visiting program emphasizes classroom performance, the visitor should also take into account less obvious but important matters such as the instructor's ability to interest his students in the basic objectives of the course, his handling of written assignments, and his professional competence generally.
>
> After your final conference with the instructor whom you have visited, will you please write for the Department a summary of your impressions.

Yours truly,

Committee on Lower Division Courses

Dear _____:

It is the policy of the department to ask senior members to visit classes of a new member during each of his first four semesters of teaching at Michigan. The principal object of these visits is to offer friendly and professional counsel; another object is to provide, in a memorandum from each visitor to the department, a record of informed and responsible opinion, representing several points of view, for the use of the Executive Committee in its discussions of reappointments and promotions.

The interests of the visitor go beyond classroom procedures. He will be glad to discuss many aspects of the course: planning, paper assignments and marking, examinations, the place of the course in the curriculum. Normally, he will confer with you after visiting two or three classes early in the semester, then visit again later on.

This semester I am asking_____to be your visitor. Please confer with him soon to arrange the dates of his visits and to acquaint him with your handling of course materials.

Sincerely yours.

Chairman, Committee on Lower
Division Courses

Finally, he brought his proposition to the departmental Steering Committee. This body, consisting of three from the junior ranks, three from the senior, had come into being early in the fall at the instigation of the chairman, who had wanted to be chairman, not head, and to govern his department not from above but by the side of, working with his fellows toward common goals. He had seen a democratically elected Steering Committee as a way of institutionalizing this relationship. At first the department had faintly resisted, legitimately Missourian about its value, but it had finally gone along. And the promise of quicker and broader dissemination of information and of more general participation in departmental government had seemed to be in the process of being realized. The Steering Committee was, therefore, the appropriate group to take up and settle the question of visitation--unless the entire department was to be convened as a committee of the whole. Past experiences at Michigan and Carnegie dismissed this alternative from most minds.

Discussion was vigorous. The instructor on the committee, knowing that the department was planning to contract its Freshman English offerings and hence its staff and that no instructor could hope to stay on beyond his allotted three years, saw that visitor's reports might well strengthen and particularize the all-too-commonly bland terminal letters of recommendation, and he spoke out firmly in support of the proposal--firmly but briefly. The others were, to a man, not hostile but doubtful, and the chairman, challenged, allowed himself to argue passionately for his beliefs. Why assume the visitor would be rigid, fat-headed, impervious to the new? Did these adjectives apply to the members of this Committee? Why not

perceive the visitor in the image of themselves? If they were senstive, ought they not attribute sensitivity to the visitor? Endow him with their own generosity, kindness, openness. See him in the mirror of themselves, their best selves.

The upshot of the meeting was threefold. Most obviously, there was the appointment of a subcommittee to work with the chairman upon the question, to see whether certain doubts or alternatives might not be effectively dealt with. Less obviously to the chairman, most members of the committee still harbored very grave doubts and did not, in fact, envision visitation as actually coming about. Less obviously to the committee, the chairman, persuaded of the success of his rhetoric and confident of the merits of his proposal--the chairman did envision visitation as all but present, approved, in action. The lone instructor may have seen all this. He seemed to be enjoying himself.

These weeks brought to the chairman's desk a quartet of thoughtful memoranda, most of which had also a wider circulation within the department. They expressed concern lest visitation be authoritarian, bureaucratic, insensitive, inhumane, stultifying, corrupting, divisive. They proposed alternatives: an "open" system with all classrooms subject to visitation by any member of the staff, pedagogical discussion groups meeting regularly or irregularly, team teaching assignments, the separation of evaluative from instructional operations. The arguments can be extrapolated fairly easily, but it may be useful here to let the memoranda speak for themselves. Each expresses not so much an idea as a person whose various private, professional, and public concerns all came complexly and thoughtfully to bear on the question.

The first was by Assistant Professor Roger Burbridge (aged 35, Ph.D. Connecticut 1967, entering his second year at Carnegie-Mellon):

> Visitation as you conceive it (i.e., Michigan style) runs counter to the healthy liberalizing trend in American education, and threatens to institute a sterile authoritarianism at a moment when the department can ill afford it. The system is envisioned as promoting mutual respect and cooperation among the ranks, but in my opinion it will destroy the good will that exists; it is supposed to provide younger teachers with the helpful experience of their seniors, but I fear that it will produce humiliation and resentment. Young teachers need no reminder of their inferior and precarious status, especially from a system which could so easily become punitive rather than instructive.
>
> The idea that, in a rapidly growing society, wisdom is peculiarly invested in age is logically indefensible and even morally repugnant. The growing gap that exists between our students' needs and what, traditionally, we have given them can only be bridged by new ideas, experimentation, even by a complete rethinking of what education should do; such innovation springs typically from young teachers, and we should not stifle their creativeness and enthusiasm--an inevitable outcome, I believe, of a Michigan-type system. Even a teacher's errors can be valuable; a teacher who does not make mistakes and learn from them must be singularly tradition-bound and unimaginative.
>
> I urge you to consider a plan that would incur the minimum of rancor,

would be genuinely educational, and would realize all of your constructive goals as well: an open-doors policy which would give all teachers freedom to visit one another at their mutual convenience. I can gain more from visiting a superior teacher, be he full professor or instructor, than from the unsolicited judgment of a senior staff member with whom I may have profound pedagogical disagreements or who even--and it happens--be personally hostile to me. And a visitor might even learn something from me--a possibility he could overlook if he were sitting in judgment. Lastly, your purpose of evaluating teachers for promotion would be served far better by soliciting a large number of informal views from those of their colleagues who have seen them in action.

The second was by Assistant Professor David Demarest (aged 37, Ph.D. Wisconsin 1963, entering his fifth year at Carnegie-Mellon):

I am opposed to the Michigan plan of class visitation--without careful re-definition of its applicability here.
My rationale is like this:
There are two primary purposes for class visits--
1) Evaulation of teachers who are up for career decisions:
2) Exchange of pedagogical wisdom.
If the first is our prime objective, let's not set up an elaborate bureaucratic system. Let's just simply each year appoint three or four people who will have a responsibility to visit and evaluate.
If the second is our objective, we can do much better than Michigan. Let's recall first that teachers learn from watching teachers. That's the great method of learning what it's about--helpful advice by visitors to the contrary. Any visiting system should thus involve reciprocity between faculty members.
Second, if teaching wisdom is the end, reciprocal visits among peers will be as important as those between ranks. If we must institutionalize a system, let's recognize that fact.
Third, we do at Tech have audio-visual replay taping available as a method. Let senior and good teachers tape a couple of classes a year and invite junior members to a showing. Let younger staff reciprocate with a tape of their choice. Talking over the comparison will be helpful to both staff members.
But rather than any system, why don't we declare an "open" department--any staff member, any student welcome to any class, always. Learning after all is public, and professionally we're committed to the sharing of our views. Let's publicize to the students that our classes are always open. Let's invite faculty, of any rank or department, if they are interested.
Let's reject red tape--or evaluative motives hiding behind interest in pedagogy. Let's open it up.

The third was by Assistant Professor James Hastie (aged 33, M.A. New York University 1961, ABD Indiana 1966, entering his fourth year at Carnegie-Mellon):

Something there is about the tone and quality of the "Michigan letters" which bothers me. At the least, they seem stuffy; moreover, I feel they are vaguley offensive. The ends of improved instruction and faculty

evaluation might be better served in other ways.

First of all, I regard education as an ongoing experiment. I have never taught the same course twice. I always make mistakes, and sometimes I recognize them and learn from them. I discuss my teaching, my classes, and my materials with my colleagues often and at length. I have no objection to permitting fellow faculty members to drop in and watch my classes. Indeed, as Dave Demarest put it about his 12th grade class, "I need all the help I can get!"

What bothers me is the exclusiveness of the evaluation procedure. In some of my classes I use a frankly open and experimental approach. I can well imagine that some of my more traditionally oriented colleagues might be startled by the experiments. In my own mind I can already hear the two most likely responses: either madness or an abdication of responsibility. While both of these responses probably have a basis in fact, the more important fact is that I encourage my students to be critical of me, of each other, and of themselves.

Again, I have no objection to visitations. What I object to is the nature of evaluation. If a traditionally oriented colleague is going to visit me in class, my impulses would be to "perform" in the classroom whatever it is that teachers are " sposed to do." Such pressures toward "performances" strike me as intellectually dishonest and pedagogically unfortunate.

Perhaps a better way to work for more effective teaching would be for the department to have a weekly happy hour where we could get together specifically to discuss what is going on in our classes. A loosened up, free discussion (a lush's guide to better teaching?) of content, methods, responses, etc. seems more likely to result in understanding and communication than an occasional visitation and chat.

The end of evaluation might be better served by "open" classes, essentially along the lines suggested by both Dave and Roger in their recent memos. I am willing and even eager to share my "happenings" with curious or interested faculty--and even students! But I would also like to think that evaluation of my laboratory could also reflect a wide spectrum of reaction.

These memoranda were from the junior ranks, from those who might regard themselves as the victims of the visitation. But the fourth came from Associate Professor John Hart (aged 51, Ph.D. Yale University 1942, entering his twenty-third year at Carnegie-Mellon) whose comments, the chairman was later to learn, seemed to many in the upper ranks to settle the matter.

I suppose I ought to put down on paper my feeling about visitng classes while a statement will still be of use.

The trouble with firm resistance to visitation of classes is that it smacks of fogeyism (since we have never done it) and it denies the obvious claim of quantitative measurement without which anyone automatically and permanently classifies himself as dinosauric.

Let me start by saying that I am not trying to keep the door of my classroom shut. It has always been open--to rare auditors, colleagues, visiting firemen, stray dogs and an occasional pigeon. The visits, I am sure, have never been instructive--on either side. The visitor has been treated to a slow-paced, rambling, non-directed discussion of what he feels to be nothing terribly consequential I have

the advantage of mumbled thank you's followed by a hurried disappearance of the visitor (presumably to the nearest men's room to throw up). That's all right; the door is still open, preferably without advance notice, to everyone from the janitor to Stever [Carnegie-Mellon's president], as long as he doesn't keep stamping his feet.

The objection is more generalized. It is out of concern for the members of the department, out of consideration of what the relationships between those members have been and must be that I am against the whole idea.

Let's consider the purported advantages of visiting:

1. It helps guide and improve the young man's teaching. Visitations are selective and occasional; that means that they are special and tense hours for the instructor and that they are fragments of the course and probably scattered hours for the visitor. Such visitations bear, I maintain, little resemblance to the course as a course taught by the instructor over a semester or even to his day to day performance in the classroom. The "guidance" is likely to be limited to mannerisms and superficial techniques rather than anything essential to the relationship of teacher and students; it is further inevitably influenced by the visitor's own methods and habits which no doubt suit that person very well but would be completely incomprehensible or wrong for the instructor. Anything gained in the way of improvement would seem to me to be negligible and worth neither the time nor the anguish.

The only way an instructor can learn is by going in and trying and failing and going in and trying something else and failing and so on, until he himself has over the years established a rapport with his students based upon his own personality, his knowledge of his subject matter, his developed ability to listen to his students, to come to know when to push ahead and when to pull up short, etc. Even then, even with the best teachers in the world, classes can go wrong, too great a gap may occur.

2. It provides evidence for evaluation of the young man's teaching. I don't mean to make an ogre of the visitor here, or to insist on the spectre of fear at using visitation for evaluating purposes; the instructor inevitably invites his own fears, develops his own lump in the throat at the prospect. What I do today in class may determine what my visitor says about me, what my future recommendations are, what place I am able to teach at, my promotion, my whole future. The man who is not able to conjure up such an image is not worth his salt; the man who masters all these terrors has mastered all these terrors--he has not indicated anything about his ability to teach. He might get an A from Dale Carnegie, though, and from his visitor, too. In short, the evidence is there but for reasons suggested in item 1 and added to here, it is quite likely to be highly unreliable. It looks good, it is something on paper and because it is on paper it is going to impress administrators. But let's impress them with the right things.

If we reject visitation, what do we have to go on?

1. We have had joint teaching experiences before and will have again. I have taught courses with Sochatoff, Slack, Woodruff, Cottrell, and Hayes. I also taught a semester course jointly with Dave Eskey in his first try as a teacher; Slack did the same with Bob Crozier.

2. Encourage semester-long course-taking by colleagues (not for credit). In my time, I have sat in on sections of courses taught by Parshall, Schutte, Steinberg, Goodfellow and Alemany that I can think of offhand. It took some extra time, but it was time well spent.

3. Arrange discussions of novels taught in the larger courses at which instructors can consider meaning, approaches, questions, whatever. And discussions lead to all kinds of ideas and implications for people engaged in them. They have always been helpful.

4. Throw people together a lot. English teachers are going to talk shop if given any chance at all. Free exchange leads to experiment and improvement.

All the above may and I think does contribute to the stimulation and improvement of teaching. It also gives full opportunity for including evaluative judgments of teaching. Over a three year stretch (which is the usual time we have instructors), any kind of contact with a man will reveal whether he is working at, thinking about, trying out, ideas. It is far more dependable than the coffee room gossip Jim Myers was predicting as a basis for evaluation. It is in my judgment sounder than visiting, however contradictory that may seem. And it allows for a more natural kind of relationship (friendship, even) than the supervisor-employee thing that visiting it seems to me necessitates.

With 8,000,000 instructors (about right for Michigan?) visitation is the only way. In a department with 35 people, five of whom are new, no.

It began to be borne in on the chairman that to his new colleagues the University of Michigan loomed as an educational River Rouge plant, gigantic, industrial, and impersonal. But though he sympathized with their doubts, he thought he detected in certain paragraphs of certain of the memoranda a tendency to arrogate virtues to the self and impute vices to the system. And the argument variously urged for an "open" department he viewed doubtfully. If it meant all classes to be open to visiting at all times, it seemed to him a far graver intrusion on privacy than was the system of visitation he proposed. If it meant something less extreme, then it was a fine idea but to be viewed rather as a supplement to than a substitute for visitation. So it was that he met with his subcommittee members, argued anew according to his old persuasions, concurred in certain modifications of the Michigan arrangements (of which more hereafter), and achieved, so he thought, further if somewhat reluctant approbation for his cause. The next day department members found in their mail boxes, over his initials, the following notice:

Shortly the department will inaugurate its visitation program. The plan is to visit all instructors both this semester and next, all assistant professors either this semester or next.

I know there are doubts and some dismay. I know that visitors have to spend time they might use elsewhere. I know that the person being visited may suffer anxiety and harbor resentment. My conviction is that the gains are far greater than the losses in improving teaching, in providing ourselves with that kind of precise knowledge about our own performances which will help us in matters of promotion and placement.

There will be questions, of course, which I shall be happy to talk over at all times.

According to its regular schedule, the Steering Committee met that afternoon. Its members had one question, in effect, though it took many forms: Did the chairman think that the committee, the week before, had indicated its full approval? Was not the subcommittee to report to the parent committee for approval or disapproval? Was this newly instituted Steering Committee to steer or merely rubber stamp. The emotions inspiring the questioning were varied, of course, but intense. The dominant ones were anger and dismay--not so much about the visitation program, which became at this point a subordinate issue, as about the whole nature of the departmental community and its government. Was it to be authoritarian or democratic? The chairman's own emotion was dismay at the failures of his judgment and sympathy. The approbation he had ascertained was deference, was courtesy--even compassion, perhaps--not approval of his position. His sense that everyone had talked, argued, and had been reasoned into consent and that more than sufficient time had been allowed for the process derived from an illegitimate projection of his own feeling for the case.

The committee and its chairman were having a confrontation but no one wanted victory. Each wanted a viable solution, a way to resolve this issue and promote the department's working democratically together. Wanting this, they worked toward it indirectly arguing again fervently the causes for and against visitation. The respect and decency with which they conducted the argument were among the causes for its ultimate resolution. Another was the pair of modifications of the Michigan program that the subcommittee had adopted. One of these was to require that the teacher being visited receive a copy of the visitor's report. The other was to let him ask for further visiting if he felt the initial visitor to have been negligent, prejudiced or otherwise unjust. As the committee reviewed these matters, it could see that under the Carnegie-Mellon program, the person being visited was not quite the hapless hind Michigan had been seen as reducing him to. Yet, no agreement, and the usual time for an adjournment was in sight. It was unthinkable that the issue go unresolved to canker the spirits of all departmental members that night and thereafter until peace was lost from among them. At that point the chairman offered this choice: to go forward with the visitation program, committed to it, or to veto the entire operation. Decision would be better than no decision, and if it were negative, well, chairmen have to learn how to live with embarrassment. The committee members agreed, but they rejected the chairman's offer to leave the room while they conferred. He must stay. Then, one by one, they chose, each with his own reservations--to go forward with the program.

It was a generous resolution. Warmed by it and tender still from the emotions that had gone into its shaping, the committee and the chairman stepped into the outer office to extract a last minute notice from their mailboxes and go home. What each found in his box was the following memorandum:

> TO: Members of the English Department
> FROM: F. Dennis Williams [aged 24, B.A., Wisconsin, 1965, A.B.D. Rice 1968, entering his first year at Carnegie-Mellon]
> RE: Visitation
>
> "I have lived some thirty years on this planet, and I have yet to hear the first syllable of valuable or even earnest advice from my seniors."
>
> --Walden

While all of Thoreau's readers over the age of thirty may be inclined to disregard his opinion, there is little question that it is a belief not uncommon among young and rebellious staff members, particularly in the more enlightened American universities. It is, in part, the reason for my objection to a procedure which appears to have been accepted in great haste by this faculty. Visitation has no place in the revolutionary educational processes of this decade; it shall return this institution to the limbo from which it has so recently struggled to emerge.

The nineteenth-century educational system in this country was based on a very strict form of authoritarianism. In the public schools, a movement to supplant dictatorial supervision began as early as 1900, and became a prominent movement after 1910. It was then the claim that supervisors, rather than providing teachers with a variety of suggestions and a wealth of materials from which they might select, had become a kind of inspector, laying down prescriptions regarding methods and materials. With the decline in power of supervisors, the system of formal evaluation by teachers and administrators gained support. It is only in the last thirty years that this system has receded. In the secondary schools, where the experience and education of the teacher are more readily open to question than are those of the professor, formal teacher evaluation is no longer the accepted practice.

In the university, the system of visitation is nearly unknown. The anachronistic existence of this institution at the University of Michigan seems hardly sufficient precedent for its precipitate acceptance by our department. As early as 1915, the National Education Association adopted a resolution in opposition to "those 'ratings' and records which unnecessarily disturb the teacher's peace and make the rendering of the best service impossible." In recent years, the NEA has restated its objections to all plans which require "subjective ratings." Is there anyone on this faculty so naive as to believe that this proposed system will be objective? With the knowledge that the foremost educators in this nation have rejected such forms, and in addition have singled out unstructured comments as a source of subjectivism, shall we nevertheless institute this program of visitation within <u>two weeks</u> following the opening meeting of the steering committee. It is a characteristic of wisdom not to do desperate things. Where is that reasoned discussion supposed to characterize the academic world. "Wisely and slow; they stumble that run fast." (<u>Romeo and Juliet</u>, II, iii, 94)

It is apparent that this system is ready to begin operations. Memoranda written by younger members of this department have been treated with levity; thoughtful contemplation of the more serious issues has not taken place, and, one must assume, will not take place. I encourage all members of this faculty to refuse to implement this system until it has received a full and adequate hearing. I refuse to participate in such a program, not only because of the haste in which it has been conceived, but because it is a violation of every principle of academic freedom and will inevitably lead to standardization and the limitation of that experimentalism so vital to a developing university. Any man more right than his neighbors constitutes a majority of one.

That night and the next day knots of concerned department members collected in

the corridors and offices of Baker Hall. Should there be revolt? Was Big Brother here to stay? There was that kind of thing and much, much more that was less fearful, more constructive. Should there be further discussion, a departmental meeting, etc.? Several members came to the chairman to review the entire matter. Through the hours of the day the uncertainties dragged on, the chairman and the Steering Committee's voice clear, the department's irresolute reluctance equally clear. Then again in the mailboxes appeared a memorandum, this from another instructor [James Myers, aged 24, M.A. Columbia 1966, entering his second year at Carnegie-Mellon], the instructorial member of the Steering Committee.

MYERS *contra* WILLIAMS

> "I mean what would you rather do. What comes into your head first. No matter how silly it is."
>
> "I don't know," Cohn said. "I think I'd rather play football again with what I know about handling myself, now."
>
> --Ernest Hemingway

I have known people who thought Robert Cohn was the hero of *The Sun Also Rises*, but I have always considered them fools, even though we were all young staff members teaching the novel to freshman at the enlightened university of Cleveland State. They hated Hemingway for his cynical defeatism and were much happier teaching *Brave New World*, where the enemy, the establishment, is less elusive; and the hero, Savage--a great admirer of *Romeo and Juliet*--more heroic in his determination to do his own thing. These indeed were young revolutionaries who, unlike the old revolutionaries, were astounded at the prospect of anyone disagreeing with them, much less standing them against a wall.

Nothing short of an apocalypse would have persuaded them that they were responsible for what they did in class and that they should ever have to answer for it. "A Last Judgment," Blake said, "is Necessary because Fools flourish." I have always been a great admirer of Blake.

But enough of these rambling, senile remembrances of the academic year 1966-67; let me discuss the problem at hand: visitation at Carnegie-Mellon. A fearsome word, visitation, with its supernatural connotations. It raises the spector of force, of the instructor's being forced to become a plastic model of some fusty old fart of a professor. How does that happen, I wonder? *Because* the old man threatens to give us bad reviews if we fail to conform? I cannot see the causality, the inevitable necessity. I cannot see howling for the cloistered, inviolable sanctuary of the instructor's classroom; "that which purifies us is trial, and trial is by what is contrary." The instructor who would conform to escape censure is venal, callow, cowardly, regardless of the power marshalled against him. "Hige sceal e heardra, heorta e cenre,/ mod sceal e mare, e ure maegen lytla " ["Purpose shall be the firmer, heart the keener, courage shall be the more, as our might lessens." Donaldson, trans.]

But perhaps no one is impressed by the Anglo-Saxon ideal; perhaps we have lost the heart as well as the language. What cheer for the coward, then? Let us consider what tangible things we could lose through unfavorable evaluations. Tenure? Promotion? As you will recall, instructors of English may stay at Carnegie-Mellon for three years. At the end of three years, barring divine intervention, we leave.

Further, as Mr. Eastman has observed, the department needs no justification for refusing to extend anyone's contract. "When you ain't got nothin, you got nothin to lose." (Bob Dylan, "Like a Rolling Stone.")

That we stand to gain by favorable evaluation seems to me tediously obvious--and unfavorable reports will not remain in our dossiers when we leave C-M U. The possible harm is negligible and the possible gain finite, a consideration that ought to inspire some tepid belief in the fearful: "cela vous fera croire et vous abetira."

I have my doubts on the efficacy of visitation for improving teaching; I am of John Hart's opinion that we learn by falling on our faces. I am not going to change my methods unless I believe down in my gut that I have been mistaken. But I am willing to listen to advice, even from my seniors; and if I were not, I should have some difficulty justifying my choice of profession.

The academic world is not predicated upon the assumption that every man within it is a phoenix, and academic freedom is not the freedom to be a law unto oneself. The world and that freedom will inevitably lead to the worse standardization of all: every man is right. That notion goes beyond the childish Haroldian pose of rebellion, beyond the case of arrested development, beyond the pale and into the abyss where we no longer have the freedom to assert that "a line is a line in its minutest subdivisions," to assert that a thing is itself and nothing else. When we are all right, then we are truly "all intermeasurable by one another: certainly a happy state of agreement, in which I for one do not agree. God keep you and me from the divinity of yes and no too--the yea, nay, creeping Jesus--from supposing up and down to be the same thing, as all experimentalists must suppose."

To hell with your revolution, Williams.

After such passion, what delay? Lists were drawn up, names assigned, and visitation in the English Department at Carnegie-Mellon University got under way the following week. Whether it would work, or how, or how well--these were questions to be resolved hereafter.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY Association of Departments of English TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE U.S. OFFICE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER."